

# A General “Ethical Case Study/Vignette” Facilitator Guide

## Suggested Use:

Case Studies/Vignettes provide a conceptual environment to work through complex situations. Case studies can be valuable as they allow sharing experiences to learn from others’ successes and mistakes. Hopefully this will help empower Soldiers to successfully negotiate morally stressful situations encountered in service.

An Ethical Case Study/Vignette, a story that presents a group of participants with a problem, dilemma or conflict in a situation that has personal and/or professional moral/ethical considerations, may be used as a stand-alone product or as an aide in a Training Course for either individual or group learning. The questions below are examples that comprehensively cover a range of learner experience and may be used directly or as aids for facilitators to formulate their own questions. If used as a facilitated exercise, the facilitator should identify student experience and, if applicable, training course outcomes in order to use questions that are most appropriate for the group.

One way to use this package:

- Read/distribute identified/applicable questions as required for each section to be discussed.
- Write/ have students write question answers at the end of each section and either collect or compare during discussion.
- Use supplemental questions as necessary to reflect on/enhance discussions.
- In general:
  1. Note the facts: Who is involved? What is the situation?
  2. Identify the ethical issues: What is at stake? What values are in conflict?
  3. Brainstorm options available for the participants: What can the leaders do? What can the soldiers do? What can other participants do?
  4. Evaluate ethical decisions and actions through three ethical “lenses” or processes:
    - a. Rules lens – What is right by the laws, rules, norms, or duties?
    - b. Outcomes lens – What produces the best consequences for the stakeholders?
    - c. Virtues lens – What is the most overall moral/virtuous action?
  5. Decide what should be done. Justify this decision.
  6. Compare and contrast your decision and justification with that of other people.
  7. Answer any questions which accompany the Case Study/Vignettes you are reading.
  8. How is this scenario similar to other scenarios you have studied? How is it different?
  9. How do you decide what to do when the lenses provide conflicting guidance?
  10. Develop a personal plan of action for similar situations.
  11. What did you learn from the exercise?
  12. How do you think/feel about what you learned?
  13. How will you use this learning in your job/future/career/etc.?



**If applicable, use the following questions to focus on specific areas of Character development.**

**Area: Ethical Processing**

**Recognize the Conflict**

1. At what point did the individual recognize the presence of a moral/ethical conflict, problem or dilemma?

**Evaluate the Options**

1. What feasible alternatives can you come up with for this situation?
2. Which ethical/perception lenses did the individual employ?
3. Which was the most moral/virtuous or right thing to do?
4. What are the rules or norms that govern this situation?
5. What were possible outcomes of the event?
  - a. With regard to the individual personally?
  - b. With regard to the direct supporting individual(s) personally?
  - c. With regard to the individual(s) unit?
  - d. With regard to US/Foreign relations?
6. What are the competing values/beliefs/norms/rules that caused the conflict, problem or dilemma?

**Commit to a Decision**

1. What was the driving force in the individual decision - completing the mission, saving more Soldiers, her/his values, following ROE, etc.?
2. What responsibilities did the individual have to balance as she/he made the decision?

**Act**

1. What actions did the individual demonstrate when executing the decision?
2. What might have happened if the individual did not take any action?
3. What level of courage did the individual need to go ahead with her/his decision?
4. What moral/ethical adversity did the individual overcome in making her/his decision?

**Area: Character Development**

**Moral/Ethical Maturity**

1. What does the individual's ability to make this type of decision say about her/his moral/professional identity?
2. What qualities of a "Professional Soldier" were displayed?
3. How did the individual show that she/he understood the importance of being a "Professional Soldier?"
4. How did the individual reason through the conflict, problem or dilemma?
5. Did the individual understand the situation and consequences?
6. Was there a conflict with the individual's internal virtues (moral self/identity)?
7. What thought process might the individual have used?
8. How might the individual's moral identity change/modify as a result of the event?
9. Did the individual act as if she/he "owned" this problem/dilemma? How?

**Moral/Ethical Strength**

1. How might the individual's moral confidence change/modify as a result of the event?
2. How did the individual display self-discipline?
3. Did the individual display any level of resilience?
4. What level of courage did the individual have to display to make this decision?



- a. What was at stake with this decision?
- b. Were the consequences of his/her and his/her unit's actions clear?

#### **Feedback/Reflection**

1. Did the individual recognize the presence of a *moral/ethical decision* as she/he faced this situation? If so, what was the decision? Why was it a moral/ethical decision?
2. Did the individual make an *outcome-based decision*? How did she/he analyze this situation? What were the competing interests in this decision? How would you qualify his/her judgment?
3. Did the individual make a *clear decision* and communicate it to her/his unit? How would you make decisions clear in ambiguous situations?
4. What actions demonstrate "*following through*" with a decision?
5. What factors could have changed the individual's mind in making this decision?
6. How will the individual's decision affect future decisions she/he may make?
7. What were possible outcomes for the individual's leadership?
8. If you were in this situation, what would you as the leader do?
9. If you were in this situation, what would your unit teammates expect you to do?
10. If you were the individual's Commander, what would you have expected him to do?
11. What actions could the individual take to better prepare him/her for moral/ethical conflicts, problems or dilemmas?

### **Area: Ethical Leadership/Leaders Developing Followers**

#### **Modeling Ethical Behavior**

1. Why is important for leaders to make the "right" decision?
  - a. With regard to their followers?
  - b. With regard to Higher Command?
  - c. With regard to US interests?
2. How did the individual model ethical behavior/leadership?
3. What are the effects of leaders modeling ethical behaviors?

#### **Accelerating Development**

1. How would a leader utilize this event to develop followers?
  - a. During AAR?
  - b. During the next pre-deployment?
  - c. During discussions of similar circumstances?
  - d. During "*hip-pocket*" or emergent training opportunities?
2. How would a leader use the idea of moral/ethical intensity to make this training or other training opportunities more effective?
3. How would a leader use the idea of the "Ethical Battlespace" to make this training or other training opportunities more effective?
4. How important is it for leaders to review and discuss an incident in order to reinforce good decisions and discourage bad ones?

#### **Ethical Culture/Climate**

1. How would a leader utilize this event to evaluate the unit's/command's Ethical Culture/Climate?
2. What steps would a leader take to ensure the command's junior leaders use ethical events to make training opportunities more effective?
3. How can a leader use the idea of the "Ethical Battlespace" to make training opportunities more effective?



4. How can a leader encourage command personnel to engage in moral discussions and decision-making?

### **Area: Other Questions/Considerations**

#### **Analysis**

1. How are the rules/regulations that govern this type of situation used?
2. What would be the correct “book-answer” in this situation?
3. What would a person of character do in this situation?
4. What level of supervision is the individual under in making this decision? Does that make a difference?
  - a. What level of supervision would she/he have experienced if something went wrong, either way (15-6 investigation, etc.)?
  - b. What role do investigations and After Action Reviews play in shaping a Soldier’s conduct?
5. What threat of punishment was there with this decision? Did that affect the decision?
6. What would be the reaction of the individual’s subordinates to this decision?
7. To whom was the individual obligated in making this decision? (Company Commander, Army, civilians)
8. Would it be acceptable to have such weighty decisions left in the hands of an E4 Corporal? Is it possible for leaders always to be present when a critical decision is made? How does this relate to the idea of teaching people *how* to think rather than *what* to think?
9. What steps could the individual or her/his leaders have taken to avoid this situation from happening in the first place? How effective is prevention in these types of situations?

#### **Stretch the Learning**

1. What is the one key insight that you are taking away from this experience and will put into practice in your leadership?
2. What did you learn from listening to the reactions and reflections of other leaders?
3. What did you learn most from the conclusion or from hearing the rest of the story?
4. Considering the other leader comments in the reaction video to this situation, do you think that the reaction(s) and the individual’s actions were consistent with other experienced leaders (or other leaders you’ve known)?
5. Is there a value or belief that is applicable to different outcomes for the same dilemma? What? How does one make a choice when different outcomes’ values are the same?
6. Did the individual receive negative feedback from his peers? How important is it for leaders to review and discuss an incident in order to reinforce good decisions and discourage bad ones?
7. What are the rules that govern this situation? Is there a correct book answer for this situation?
  - a. What guidelines did the individual refer to in explaining his decision? What competing guidelines are identified?
  - b. How important is it for every Soldier to know the Rules of Engagement?
  - c. How important is it for every Soldier to know the INTENT of the specific ROE?
8. Did the individual exhibit the will to win in this situation? Soldier Care? Flexibility?
9. What new insights emerge after watching the video(s)? Is there a theme(s) that emerges?
10. What other title would fit this vignette and why?
11. How might this scenario apply to you/your unit (now/in the future)?

#### **Consequences**

1. How might this scenario have played out differently?

#### **ARMY VALUES Training**

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- a. What is the *worst thing* that could have happened if no action were taken (or simply waited or did not make the report)?
  - b. What is the *worst thing* that could have happened based on the action taken?
2. How many different feasible and possible solutions or alternatives can you come up with for this situation?
3. What different outcomes could result in this situation?
4. What controls could be put in place to mitigate the risks/undesirable outcomes of this situation?
5. Are there any potential unintended negative consequences as a direct or indirect result of the decisions made in this situation?
6. What could be done to prevent this from happening again?
7. Was the individual right to trust her/his “feeling”? What must a gut instinct be based on? What other factors did the individual(s) pay attention to that drove her/his decision? How do leaders teach their Soldiers to pay attention to these factors?

**Leadership Style / Future Applications**

1. What are the future implications of this decision and experience?
2. What is a universal value or principle that informs this decision?
3. How could you prepare for this situation now, should you face it in the future?

